Uniform licensing fee

210. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have accepted the recommendations of TRAI for imposition of a uniform licensing fee for telecom service providers both cellular and WLL;

(b) whether such undue delay in enforcing a uniform licence system both for cellular and WLL operators has helped WLL operators to amass fortunes due to lack of clear-cut guidelines on limited mobility of WLL providers; and

(c) whether any of the WLL operators have been found to have violated the ground rules of limited mobility clause and if so, whether any penalty has been imposed on them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. At the time of permitting Limited Mobility to Basic Service Operators on 25.1.2001, the licence fee for Cellular and Basic Service Operators was brought at par.

(c) Two of the Basic Service Operators have been providing combination of certain facilities which changed the nature of the service thereby blurring the difference between limited mobility facility and full-fledged cellular service. A notice to discontinue the features/facilities was issued to them accordingly. Further, the Government accepted the TRAI recommendations on Unified Access Service Licence (UASL) and the Basic Service Operators have migrated to UASL after paying the requisite fee including penalty.

Unified license

211. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) how does Government define and differentiate between 'unified license' as distinct from 'universal license';

(b) whether the TRAI has come up with a recommendation on 'unified license' and whether they have elaborated on 'universal license' as well; and

(c) what are the factors which informed TRAI's recommendation on sequencing implementation of 'unified license' ahead of that of the 'universal license'?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Sir, *inter alia*, based on the recommendations of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), an addendum to New Telecom Policy-1999 (NTP-99) has been issued in November, 2003 to provide for the following categories of licenses for Telecommunication services :

(i) Unified Licence for Telecommunication Services permitting Licensee to provide all Telecommunication/Telegraph services covering various geographical areas using any technology;

(ii) License for Unified Access (Basic and Cellular) Services permitting Licensee to provide Basic and/or Cellular Services using any technology in a defined service area.

TRAI has not used the term 'universal licence' in its recommendations.

(b) and (c) TRAI, in its recommendations provided to Department of Telecommunications on 27.10.2003, had mentioned that the present system of Licensing should be replaced by Unified Licensing/Automatic authorization Regime and that the objective of the Unified Licensing/ authorization Regime is to be achieved in two-stage process with the Unified Access License Regime for Basic and Cellular Services in the first phase, to be followed up with a process to define the guidelines and rules for fully Unified License/Authorization Regime. The recommendations of TRAI have been accepted and the first phase of Unified Access Services License Regime for Basic and Cellular Services has come into effect. TRAI have not used the term 'universal licence' in its recommendations.

Wide variations in service areas of Telecom Services from a city to whole country, licence fee from 0% to 15% and various other licensing

and regulatory issues led TRAI to recommend the implementation of Unified Licensing regime in two stages.

CELL phone connections

212. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cell phone connections in the country as on the 31st October, 2003;

(b) the number of land line telephone connections in the country as on the 31st October, 2003; and

(c) how does these numbers compare with cell and land line connections as on the 31st October, 1998?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN) : (a) to (c) Sir, as intimated by the Cellular Operators Association of India on behalf of the Cellular Operators, the number of subscribers of Cellular Mobile Telephone Service in the Country as on 31st October, 1998 and 31st October, 2003 were 9,84,352 and 1,93,46,303 respectively.

The number of land line telephone connections including Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) connections in the Country as on 31st October, 1998 and 31st October, 2003 were, 1,88,99,048 and 4,73,35,078 respectively.

Rural Telephone Exchange in West Bengal

213. SHRI Sk. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) the number of telephone exchange set up in the rural areas of all the districts of West Bengal;

(b) whether more telephone exchanges are to be set up in the State; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps that have been taken to improve the situation?